

and I am now at leisure to add a few words upon the
subject of the present

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By Mr. TOWN,

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*Nulla viri cura interea, nec mentio fiet
Damnorum.* — — — — — Juv.

To Mr. TOWN.

SIR,

If polygamy was allowed in this country, I am sure I might maintain a seraglio of wives at less expence than I have brought upon myself by marrying one woman. One did I say? Alas! I find it to my cost, that a wife, like a polypus, has the power of dividing and multiplying herself into as many bodies as she pleases. You must know, Mr. Town, I took a woman of small fortune and made her my own flesh and blood: but I never thought that all her relations would likewise fasten on me with as little ceremony as a colony of fleas. I had scarce brought

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her home, before I was obliged to marry her mother: then I was prevailed on to marry her two maiden sisters; after that I married her aunts; then her cousins—In short, I am now married to the whole generation of them. I do not exaggerate matters, when I say that I am married to them all: for they claim as much right to every thing that is mine, as the person whom the world calls my wife. They eat, drink, and sleep with me: Every room in my house is at their command, except my bedchamber: They borrow money of me:—and since I have the whole family quartered upon me, what signifies which of them takes upon her my name,—my wife, her sister, or her twentieth cousin?

O Mr. Town! I never sit down to table without the lamentable prospect of seeing as much victuals consumed, as would dine a whole vestry. So many mouths constantly going at my expence! And then there is such variety of provisions! for confin *Biddy* likes one dish; my aunt *Rachel* is fond of another; sister *Molly* cannot abide this; and mother could never touch that:—though I find they are all of them unanimous in liking the best of every thing in season. Besides, I could entertain a set of jolly topers at a less rate than it costs me in light wines for the women. One of them drinks nothing but *Lisbon*; with another nothing goes down but *Rhenish* and *Spa*; a third swallows me an ocean of *Bristol Milk*, with as little remorse as she would so much small beer: my eldest aunt likes a glass of dry *Mountain*, while the other thinks nothing helps digestion so well as *Madeira*. 'Twas but the other day, that my wife expressed a desire of tasting some *Claret*, when immediately all my good-natured relations had a mighty longing

longing for it: but with much ado I at last prevailed on them to compound with me for a chest of *Florence*.

You may imagine, that my house cannot be a very small one: and I assure you there are as many beds in it, as in a country inn. Yet I have scarce room to turn myself about in it; for one apartment is taken up by this relation, another by that; and the most distant cousin must have more respect shewn her than to be clapped up in a garret with the maid-servants: so that poor I have no more liberty in my own house than a lodger. Once, indeed, I in vain endeavoured to shake them off, and took a little box in the neighbourhood of town, scarce big enough to hold my own family. But alas! they stuck as close to it, as a snail to her shell: and rather than not lie under the same roof with their relation, they contrived to litter together like so many pigs in a sty. At another time, thinking to clear my house at once of these vermin, I packed up my wife and mother, and sent them to her uncle's in the country for a month. But what could I do? there was no getting rid of those left behind: my wife had made over to them the care of the household, allotting to each of them her particular employment during her absence. One was to pickle walnuts, another to preserve sweetmeats, another to make Morella brandy; all which they executed with the notableness peculiar to good housewives, who spoil and waste more than they save, for the satisfaction of making these things at home. At last my wife returned; and all that I got by her journey, was the importation of two new cousins fresh out of the country, who she never knew before were the least related to her:—but they have been so kind as to claim kindred with me by hanging upon me ever since.

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ONE would imagine, that it were sufficient for these loving relations to have the run of my table, and to make my house in every respect their own : but not content with this, they have the cunning to oblige me in a manner to find them in cloaths likewise. I should not repine, if any of my worthy relations were humble enough to put up with a cast-off suit of my wife's ; but that would be robbing the maid of her just dues, and would look more like a dependant than a relation : Not but that they will descend now and then to take a gown, before it is half worn out, (when they have talked my wife into a dislike of it)—because it is too good for a common servant. They have more spirit than to *beg* any thing : but—if my wife has a fancy to *part* with it—they will wear it, purely for her sake. A cap, an apron, or an handkerchief, which looks hideous upon her, I always find is very becoming on any other of the family : and I remember, soon after we were married, happening to find fault with the pattern of a silk brocade my wife had just bought, one of her sisters took it from her, and told me she would have it made up for herself, and wear it on purpose to spite me.

You must know, Mr. Town, that upon my marriage I was indiscreet enough to set up my chariot : and since my family has increased so prodigiously, this has given them a handle to have a coach likewise, and another pair of horses, for them to take an airing in. This also furnishes them with a pretence for running about to public diversions, where I am forced to treat them all : for they are so very fond of each others company, that one will hardly ever stir out without the other. Thus, at home or abroad, they constantly herd together : and what is still more provoking, though

though I had rather have a route every week at my house, my wife makes a merit of it, that she keeps little or no company.

SUCH is the state of my family within doors: and though you would think this sufficient for one man, I can assure you that I have other calls on me from relations no less dear to me, though I have never yet had the happiness to see them. A third cousin by my wife's father's side was set up in the country in a very good way of business; but by misfortunes in trade must have gone to jail, if my wife had not teized me into being bound for him, and for which I was soon after arrested, and obliged to pay the money. Another, a very promising youth, was just out of his time, and only wanted a little sum to set him up; which as soon as I had lent him, he run away, and is gone to sea. One of the aunts, who is now with me, (a widow lady) has an only daughter, a sober discreet body, who lived as a companion with an old gentlewoman in the country: but the poor innocent girl being drawn aside by a vile fellow that ruined her, I have been forced to support the unhappy mother and child ever since, to prevent any reproach falling on our family. I shall say nothing of the various presents, which have travelled down to my wife's uncle, in return for one turkey and chine received at *Chriſtmas*; nor shall I put to account the charge I have been at, in the goſſips fees, and in buying corals, &c. for half a dozen little nephews, neices, and cousins, to which I had the honour of standing godfather.

AND now, Mr. Town, the mention of this last circumstance makes me reflect with an heavy heart on a new ca-

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lamity,

Iamity, which will shortly befall me. My wife, you must know, is very near her time: and they have provided as great a store of caps, clouts, biggens, belly-bands, whistles, and all kinds of childbed-linnen, as would set up a Lying-in Hospital. You will conclude that my family wants no further increase: Yet, would you believe it? I have just received a letter, that another aunt, and another cousin, are coming up in the stage coach to see their relation, and are resolved to stay with her the month. Indeed I am afraid, when they have once got footing in my house, they will resolve to stay with her till she has another and another child.

I am, sir,

Your humble servant, &c.